

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

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FM USMISSION USBERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2035

AMEMBASSY BONN

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN UNN

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, WB, GW, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN WORLD SPEED SKATING
CHAMPIONSHIPS IN BERLIN

REFS: A) USBERLIN 329, B) USBERLIN 283, C) BONN 3010

1. PENDULUM HAS SWUNG ONCE MORE -- HOPEFULLY FOR
LAST TIME. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, REPRESENTATIVE
OF SOVIET SPEED SKATING ASSOCIATION INFORMED
PRESIDENT OF GERMAN SPEED SKATING ASSOCIATION
(DEREGOSKI) BY TELEPHONE FEB 26 THAT EIGHT SOVIET
SPEED SKATERS WOULD INDEED PARTICIPATE IN
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS TO BE HELD IN WILMERSDORF
STADIUM IN WEST BERLIN MARCH 6-7. DESPITE EXPIRY
FEB 17 OF DEADLINE FOR WRITTEN CONFIRMATION OF
PARTICIPATION -- WHICH HAD GIVEN RISE TO REPORTS OF
"FINAL" SOVIET DECISION TO BOYCOTT EVENT -- DEREGOSKI
INDICATED TO PRESS THAT SOVIET ENTRY WOULD BE
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ACCEPTED. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD ALREADY RECEIVED

IN INNSBRUCK (REF B) "FIRM ORAL SOVIET PROMISE"
TO PARTICIPATE; EVERYTHING WAS NOW CLEAR FOLLOWING
TELEPHONE CONVERSATION.

2. COMMENT: EITHER THERE WAS LAST-MINUTE REVERSAL
OF "FINAL" DECISION IN MOSCOW OR ELSE SOVIETS HERE
IN WEST BERLIN WERE KEPT IN REMARKABLE IGNORANCE
OF STATE OF PLAY. AS NOTED IN REF A, CONSUL
GENERAL SHARKOV TOLD SENAT CHANCELLERY FLATLY IN
MID-MONTH THAT SOVIET SKATERS WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE,
AND THIS SENSE OF FINALITY WAS ECHOED BY SOVIET
CONSUL KOZOBRODOV IN CONVERSATION WITH MISSION
OFFICER FEB 24. KOZOBRODOV DID IN FACT INTIMATE
THAT SOVIETS WOULD HAVE OPTED IN FAVOR OF PARTICIPATION
HAD MATTER BEEN HANDLED QUIETLY AND HAD SENAT
AND GERMAN SKATING ASSOCIATION NOT TAKEN SO
"DEMONSTRATIVE" A POSITION IN PUBLIC; YET HE
EXPRESSED CERTAINTY THAT NEGATIVE DECISION WOULD
HOLD. BE THAT AS IT MAY, WE NOW HAVE PROSPECT
OF SOVIETS PARTICIPATING IN INTERNATIONAL EVENT
IN WEST BERLIN ESSENTIALLY ON WESTERN TERMS, AFTER
PUBLIC REJECTION OF SOVIET DEMANDS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY
INVITATION. (WE PRESUME HERE THAT THERE WAS NO
LAST-MINUTE DEAL TO SATISFY SOVIET DESIDERATA.)
THIS, WE WOULD SUBMIT, REPRESENTS SIGNIFICANT RETREAT
ON THEIR PART. IT MAY WELL BE THAT SOVIET DESIRE
TO ENFORCE THEIR OWN INTERPRETATION OF QA PROVISION
ON INVITATIONS AND GENERALLY TO DISCOURAGE GROWTH
OF WEST BERLIN AS INTERNATIONAL CENTER MAY BE
TEMPERED BY CONCERN THAT THEY NOT MISS OUT ON
EVENTS THAT IN THEMSELVES ARE IMPORTANT TO THEM.
(CF. GDR PARTICIPATION IN 1974 IN WORLD SOCCER
CUP GAMES IN WEST BERLIN.) IN PRESENT INSTANCE,
WE NOTE THAT SOVIETS DID NOT FARE PARTICULARLY
WELL -- AT LEAST NOT AS WELL AS EXPECTED -- IN
OLYMPIC SPEED SKATING EVENTS, AND THEY MAY
THEREFORE FEEL NEED TO RECOUP SOME OF THEIR LOST
SPORTS PRESTIGE EVEN AT POLITICAL COST OF YIELDING
FOR ONCE ON INVITATIONS ISSUE. GEORGE

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